

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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R 290616Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2092

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL UDORN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 5232

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CB, TH, VN

SUBJECT: THAI REACTION TO THE SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

REF: (A) BANGKOK 4298; (B) BANGKOK 3698; (C) BANGKOK 5092,
DTG 270848Z MAR 75 (D) BANGKOK 4957, DTG 251021Z MAR 75

SUMMARY: THE THAI'S IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS CAMBODIA AND THEY
HAVE GIVEN LESS THOUGHT TO A COMMUNIST VICTORY IN SOUTH
VIETNAM. THEY HOPE THAT A POLITICAL SOLUTION WILL MATERIALIZE
IN CAMBODIA WHICH WOULD NOT PRESENT IMMEDIATE SECURITY PROBLEMS
FOR THAILAND. FOR THE LONGER TERM THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT
THE THREAT OF COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA, BUT
HOPE THAT A MULTIPOLAR BALANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, INCLUDING
THE U.S. AND THE PRC, WILL PRESERVE THAILAND'S INDEPENDENCE.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE THAI ARE NATURALLY DISMAYED AT THE SUDDEN COMMUNIST
ADVANCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND THE CONTINUING DETERIORATION OF
THE MILITARY SITUATION IN CAMBODIA. THEIR IMMEDIATE
CONCERN IS CAMBODIA, AND TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THEY HAVE NOT YET
BEGUN TO GRAPPLY SERIOUSLY WITH THE IMPLICATIONS OF A POSSIBLE
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COMMUNIST VICTORY IN SOUTH VIETNAM. THEY SEE LITTLE THE

UNITED STATES CAN OR WILL DO TO CHECK COMMUNIST ADVANCES IN INDOCHINA, AND ARE EVEN MORE ACUTELY AWARE OF THEIR OWN IMPOTENCE TO CONTROL EVENTS THERE.

2. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS MEETING DAILY ON THE CAMBODIAN SITUATION. THE IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS TO PREVENT A FLOOD OF REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA TO THAILAND. THEY ARE ADAMANT IN ASSERTING THAT THEY DO NOT WANT A REPEAT OF THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM IN NORTHEAST THAILAND.

3. THAI OFFICIALS WITH WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN HOPE A POLITICAL SOLUTION WILL MATERIALIZE IN CAMBODIA. THE RTG IS COORDINATING ITS POLICY ON CAMBODIA WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES IN PHNOM PENH OF OTHER ASEAN MEMBERS AND JAPAN, AND THE MOVES OF THESE STATES WILL INFLUENCE RTG POLICY. MFA THINKS THAT LON NOL WILL DEPART AND SIHANOUK WILL RETURN TO POWER BEFORE THE KHMER COMMUNISTS TAKE PHNOM PENH BY FORCE. THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A SIHANOUK GOVERNMENT WOULD BE AN IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THAILAND. ALTHOUGH SIHANOUK WAS ADMITTEDLY HOSTILE TO FORMER PRIME MINISTERS SARIT AND THANOM, MFA OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THE PRESENT THAI GOVERNMENT CAN HANDLE RELATIONS WITH SIHANOUK--FOR EXAMPLE, BY PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA AFTER A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. THEY ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT IN CAMBODIA WOULD HAVE TO CONCENTRATE IN THE SHORT TERM ON CONSOLIDATING ITS CONTROL OF THE POPULATION AND ON POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION.

4. MJA THUS STILL HOPES TO SEE NEUTRALIST RATHER THAN OUTRIGHT COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THEY ARE MORE IMMEDIATELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN CAMBODIA AND LAOS THAN ABOUT A COMMUNIST VICTORY IN SOUTH VIETNAM, ALTHOUGH THEY RECOGNIZE THAT SUCH A VICTORY IN VIETNAM WOULD HAVE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES FOR INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REST OF INDOCHINA. THEY BELIEVE THAT COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA WOULD PRESENT A THREAT TO THAILAND IN THE FORM OF STEPPED-UP SUBVERSION.

5. COMMENT: THE THAI ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THINKING OUT
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THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF IMMEDIATE EVENTS OR FORMULATING LONG-RANGE POLICIES TO DEAL WITH THEM. THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO BEND WITH THE COMMUNIST WIND IN INDOCHINA, NOR TO ABANDON THAILAND'S SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. RATHER, IT VAGUELY HOPES THAT A MULTIPOLAR BALANCE WILL TAKE SHAPE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA THAT WILL ENABLE THAILAND TO PRESERVE ITS INDEPENDENCE. TO THIS END, THE RTG IS SEEKING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC,

IMPROVED CONTACTS WITH NORTH VIETNAM, CLOSER COOPERATION WITH
ASEAN AND CONTINUED U.S. INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. THEY
HAVE THUS FAR AVOIDED THE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF WHETHER
SUCH A BALANCE IS POSSIBLE IN THE EVENT OF A COMMUNIST
VICTORY IN ALL OF INDOCHINA. THEY CONTINUE CAREFULLY TO WATCH AND
ASSESS OUR REACTION TO DEVELOPMENTS IN INDO-CHINA AND ATTITUDES
TOWARD SUPPLEMENTAL AID IN THE CONGRESS.

6. REFERENCES C AND D ARE USINFO TELEGRAMS REPORTING
LOCAL PRESS REACTION TO THE EVENTS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM.
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